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Review Of "Feeling And Reason In The Arts" By D. Best

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intellectual and political concerns that animated these classical theorists are of continuing relevance for understanding the nature and development of both corporate capitalist and state socialist societies in the present era.

On the other hand, this volume is not without certain shortcomings. As with any multi-authored project, a certain amount of unevenness is probably inevitable. In the present instance I found this to be less a problem with regard to matters of substance than of literary style. In short, while many of the essays are written in a clear and incisive prose that makes for pleasurable reading, a lesser but significant number of the papers suffer from an abstruse mode of expression that is at best taxing and at worst repugnant. The book's overall coherence might also have been enhanced by a concluding chapter that revisits and amplifies the discussion contained in the editors' excellent introductory comments. In the absence of such a chapter, a degree of closure may be obtained by re-reading the introduction after one has read the main body of the text.

Finally, allow me to conclude with an admittedly gratuitous observation. This volume supplies more than ample evidence testifying to the fruitfulness of the renewed interest in Marx and Weber scholarship. That is to say, the rightfulness of Marx' and Weber's standing as seminal contributors to classical social theory has been augmented by this renaissance. Speaking as a student and teacher of sociological theory, my only serious misgiving with this definition of things is that it implicitly relegates all other theorists to a secondary status in the dialogue. In particular, it has the effect of 'demoting' Emile Durkheim from his customary place alongside Marx and Weber as the three thinkers who have contributed most to establishing the basic framework of modern sociology. As a seconder of this opinion, I would cite Randall Collins' recent (1985) *Three Sociological Traditions*. Collins makes a rather compelling case that some of Durkheim's ideas can usefully be applied to address deficiencies in the 'conflict tradition' of sociological analysis represented by Marx and Weber. What is more, Collins argues that Durkheim's work also helps to bridge the macro-historical perspective of these thinkers to the whole 'micro-interactionist' tradition of Cooley, Mead, *et al.* In my judgment, these are more than sufficient grounds for insisting upon the centrality of Durkheim in the ongoing dialogue about the nature and problems of modern society.

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DAVID BEST. *Feeling and Reason in the Arts*. Winchester, MA: George Allen & Unwin 1985. Pp. viii + 200. US$28.50 (cloth: ISBN 0-04-370156-6); US$9.95 (paper: ISBN 0-04-370157-4).

Beginning from a Wittgensteinian standpoint concerning mind, language, practices, and philosophy, Best's 'central concern' is with the rational justifiability of judgments that particular things are art (viii). This issue is to be distinguished from that of the rational justification of the practices of making and responding to art, which are simply natural in human life. Certain 'instinctive responses' and 'non-rational ways of behaving and responding are the roots of the concept of art ... [and] give sense to the reasons used in discussion of the arts' (5). While artworks can extend and reshape our responses, so that some responses to works are natural chiefly in the sense of customary, the very possibility of developing customs of production and response presupposes responses that are 'immediate, primitive, and natural' (180). These primitive responses are simply ours, without justification; our capacity of responses as a whole 'rests on nothing' (180).

Reasons for judgments that particular things are art are hence internal to these natural responses. Criticism properly focuses our attention on a work, displaying it as something to be cared about, either primitively or against the background of developed media of art that have built on our natural propensities of response. Critical arguments are essentially interpretive and comparative. They offer us 'assessment without measurement,' or interpretation of a work as something to be responded to without an external standard of response (17). The knowledge critics have of works might usefully be compared to the generally narrative, historical, and comparative knowledge each of us has of some other persons as proper objects of particular care and response. Disagreements about some particular artistic judgments are to be expected, as people may to some extent have contrasting senses of relevant comparisons and the degrees of support they provide for judgments. But only to some extent: our most basic instinctive responses are shared, and disagreement about particular judgments implies objectivism about art (46-7).

Works of art express and explore emotional feelings. This is natural to them. It requires no more explanation than does the inexplicable and undeniable fact that emotions are expressed by faces (109). 'An emotional feeling' is further 'a mode of apprehending an object,' whether a work or any other thing (118). In particular (here I render the point more explicitly than Best does or might wish to), there is a feeling on the part of an audience of absorption or 'involvement' (183) that is relevant to whether a thing is art — roughly the feeling that the work's expression and exploration of feeling are sincere and genuine, not self-indulgent or pandering. (Best might prefer to say that we simply find ourselves involved with certain works, apart from feeling; I am not sure.) Leavis' account of Hardy's sincerity in 'After A Journey' illustrates our involvement with a genuine work of art (189-90).

Neither the expression of feeling nor feeling in response can be explained

causally. Artists are not simply caused to express by given feelings, and audiences are not simply caused to respond by given formal features of a work. Rather, 'the development of expressive and responsive capacities [in going systems of art founded on basic given capacities of response] *requires* the development of critical abilities' to understand and employ a language or medium of art (137). 'Consequently, the given, that is, that which ultimately gives sense to reason and explanation, is language and the forms of art' (111).

Our involvement with a work and our feeling that it is genuine and valuable are directed to its particularity in rendering an emotion or conception, that is, to the fact that '*what* is expressed [cannot] be comprehensively characterized apart from the particular *way* in which it is expressed' (167). Hence whether it is appropriate to be absorbed or involved in a given work is rationally assessable, though not externally measurable, through the production of critical descriptions of the work that reveal to what extent it possesses this sort of particularity.

Given the perennial openness of our world to change, hence the openness of our feelings about it to change, and hence the openness to change of the media of expression, art has no fixed nature (50). 'Art' cannot be defined 'in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions' (52). Nonetheless, that a work is in a medium in which there is 'the possibility of the expression of a conception of life issues' (159) and that it is particular in the sense given above (166-7) are distinctly necessary though not jointly sufficient conditions of its being art.

The distinctive value of art is that it enables us to learn through feeling to experience feelings that are reflective of general attitudes toward the world (183-92). The experience of art hence produces a kind of nonpropositional knowledge of ourselves in relation to our world, for example the sort of knowledge that Lear acquires, and that we may acquire through him, of what it feels like to be poor (183-4). Any propositions about this would be trivial. In confronting *King Lear*, the important thing is that we are offered 'an emotional experience which casts a new light on a situation, revealing what the analogous life situation amounts to' (184). Thus art is neither 'opaque' to life, with its value utterly autonomous from and uninformative about life, nor 'transparent' to life in merely presenting true propositions about it; rather it is 'translucent' in helping us 'to see [a] situation in [its] light,' in all its detail and phenomenology (174-5).

I believe Best has accurately described the logic of criticism and the role of feelings in expression and response. He has said some important and suggestive things about the value of art. These are important achievements. I am left, however, with the following reservations.

1) Best seems to me to have confused the true claims that art has no external justification, that it is rooted in certain natural responses of absorption and involvement, and that the structure and nature of our response to art cannot be justified with the (I think) false claim that art cannot be defined. In particular, though it cannot be *justified*, the structure and nature of artistic response can be *analyzed* as involving other modes of response — especially cognition, including the experiences of challenges to it and of its extension, and feeling

pleasure. I see no reason why art cannot be defined along generally Kantian lines as providing pleasure in challenging and extending our cognitive capacities. Such a definition both allows for ongoing changes within and of the media of art and is consistent with much of what Best says about its basis and value.

2) Best fails to work out the descriptive philosophical psychology that is required to uphold his argument against relativism about art. He notes that the fact that we use the term 'art' to describe certain artifacts produced within other cultures shows that 'art' must have a core of objective meaning. 'If it were asserted that the concept of art in another society was *nothing* like ours, then the assertion would be meaningless,' for without relevant likenesses nothing could justify us in using 'art' to describe their products (51). Best is right to note the incoherence of radically relativist uses of 'art.' But this incoherence does not count against those who would happily abandon the word altogether in order to talk of society or class based preferences for various things that have no common nature. Claims that 'art' ought not to be used are a common theme in the writings of so-called post-modernist relativists. In order to answer them, what is required is a demonstration that something in our psychology or nature leads persons in various cultures to produce and value things properly classifiable as art. Here too some attention to Kant's psychology and theory of taste might be helpful. It is a virtue of Best's that he has suggested that responses to art have a family resemblance to responses to pretending, clapping games, nursery rhymes, being told stories, and so on — activities such that it is nearly impossible to imagine a society of persons in which all of them were absent (6-7). Here is a beginning, but only a beginning, of the required psychology.

3) That a work is particular in Best's sense of admitting no distinction between what is expressed and how it is expressed seems to do nearly all the work in certifying it as art (and Best's talk of being in a medium of a certain kind seems to be beside the point). That is, that a work is particular in this sense seems to me to be necessary and sufficient for its being art. (Why we do and should care about such things, and how we may recognize them through feeling are of course further questions.) Engineered objects and phenomena such as airplanes, kettles, and interior decors do not constitute the counterexamples to this claim that Best takes them to be (156), for we can specify their use, function, or (loosely) expressive content independently of specifying their particular form. For any object of use, there might be another — though perhaps less elegant and more costly — that does the same job. So far as I can tell, this is uniquely not true of all works of art, so that particularity in Best's sense is necessary and sufficient for art. This stance has the further virtue of readily accommodating as art both nonrepresentational music and abstract painting, both of which, Best concedes, come out as art rather too marginally on his account (167).

Despite these objections, *Feeling and Reason in the Arts* is an important new work that comes as close as any to locating the roots of art accurately

in natural human responses, to characterizing the nature of specifically artistic expression, and to identifying the value of art.

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NORMAN DANIELS. *Just Health Care.* New York, Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press 1985. Pp. xiii + 245. US$32.50 (cloth: ISBN 0-521-23608-8); US$9.95 (paper: ISBN 0-521-31794-0).

Daniels develops an account of distributive justice for the health care setting and applies that account to some issues that provide a test, as well as illustrate the limits of, that account. The position developed is well argued and deserves the close attention of decision-makers in the health policy fields. And while he takes some perceived inequalities in the American health care system as his point of departure — for example, he notes that 25 million Americans have *no* health care insurance, that an additional 20 million are inadequately covered, and that inequalities in the United States to access to personal medical services are correlated with class and race (3) — the account he develops is of much more general interest.

The first three chapters are devoted to arguments of a theoretical nature, wherein Daniels lays out his account of distributive justice, which he calls the 'fair equality of opportunity' account. This account is then applied to questions of equity of access to health care (chapter four), rationing resources according to age (chapter five), doing justice to providers (chapter six), imposition of occupational safety standards (chapter seven), and assumptions of risk in the workplace (chapter eight). The book concludes with a ninth chapter concerning philosophy and public policy.

The account that is developed does not pretend to provide a complete foundation for a theory of distributive justice. Rather Daniels wants to make the following conditional plausible: if there is a social obligation to protect fair equality of opportunity, then health-care institutions should be designed to meet that obligation. Daniels presents reasons in support of the antecedent of this conditional and explores some implications of this fair equality of opportunity account. One implication is that 'there is a social obligation to guarantee equitable access to a broad array of medical and other health-care services. Specifically, this means that various kinds of primary and other acute care must

be available to people who need it, regardless of geographical location or ability to pay' (114).

Daniels' other discussions of what fair equality demands are of interest in their own right quite apart from his own specific conclusions. That is, he typically contrasts his own account with other positions in the literature and these criticisms are insightful and valuable in themselves. For example, in the chapter on equity of access to health care Daniels discusses three approaches from the health policy literature to defining equality of access, argues that these three approaches are really disguised ways of talking about distributive justice, and contrasts them with his approach.

The fair equality of opportunity account is developed in two stages. The first stage (chapter two) explains why health care needs are viewed as special: they are so because meeting them helps to maintain 'normal species functioning.' If normal species functioning is compromised, by disease or disability, then an individual may not receive the share of the 'normal opportunity range for his society' he otherwise would have.

The second stage (chapter three) is an argument to provide normative foundations for the explanation given at stage one. Daniels does not provide a full theoretical justification for a principle that guarantees full equality of opportunity. However, he does try to show that one general theory of justice, that of Rawls, can be extended to health-care institutions. The idea here is that, while Rawls' principle protects individual shares in access to jobs and offices, it can be extended to include the protection of individual shares of the normal opportunity range (57).

Those interested in the foundations of a theory of justice will no doubt wish to consider more closely the extension of Rawls' principle that Daniels proposes. An essay which is indispensable in this regard is that of Leon Ellsworth ('Decision-Theoretic Analysis of Rawls' Original Position,' in C.A. Hooker, et al., *Foundations and Applications of Decision Theory.* Vol. II. D. Reidel Pub. Co. 1978, 29-45). Those less interested in foundational questions will find the use which Daniels makes of his account of fair equality of opportunity an important contribution.

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